

Honorable Mention of 2022 Essay Contest
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Is the fundamental belief of Zoroastrianism the idea of one God? What does it mean to be a Zoroastrian? According to the Gathas believing in God, Ahura Mazda, is one part of being a Zoroastrian. The Gathas convey that being a Zoroastrian is about following the practices of Ahura Mazda. However, there's much more to being a Zoroastrian.

There are many ways of becoming or identifying as a Zoroastrian. Getting "Sedrepooshed", attending or celebrating Nowruz or the main Gahambars, attending Sunday School, and acknowledging and practicing the key values and morals of Ahura Mazda or Zarathustra's teachings. These practices are important to becoming a Zoroastrian. However, being a Zoroastrian does mean a belief in one God. We are one of few monotheistic religions which makes us prioritize the belief in one God. Therefore, according to Zoroastrians, devotion to God plays a large role in being a Zoroastrian. We hold the belief that a while ago a creator of existence, Ahura Mazda, taught a man named Zarathustra the morals of good conscience and wisdom. Zarathustra, in turn, wrote the Gathas to guide humans based on these teachings to lead a good life. Zarathustra was able to incorporate these just actions into his life and in return, he asked for protection and support. Zarathustra was thankful for God giving human beings a religion that taught them to lead a good life. This is how the monotheistic belief in Ahura Mazda came to be a part of our religious beliefs. We follow the teachings of Ahura Mazda and use the sentiments to guide us. Zoroastrians allow good thoughts, good words, and good deeds to guide them, integrating the teachings of Ahura Mazda into their daily lives. The two main parts of being a Zoroastrian are believing in Ahura Mazda and incorporating morals such as good thoughts, good words, and good deeds into our life. These main principles and values are taken from the Gathas. Subsequently, the Gathas do not mention that the belief in God is what defines

you as a Zoroastrian though rather, the Gathas cover the beliefs that one should endure in life by practicing good deeds and honesty. As Zoroastrians, we are not taught by Zarathustra to blindly believe and follow, but instead, we must think with our good mind and the conscience given to us to weigh our daily decisions and choices. By being active agents like this, we are able to create a better world. The Gathas, written by Zarathustra, specifically tell Zoroastrians to restore and stand against the unjust with peace “the promotion of good mind through righteousness” (Yasna 47.7 Song 13.7), defend the oppressed, practice wisdom by making decisions using a good mind “Hearken with your ears to these best counsels, Reflect upon them with best judgment” (Yasna 33.1 Song 6.1), to be fair to all “Shall deal perfect justice to all” (Yasna 33.1 Song 6.1), and to propagate happiness “happiness be the lot of him who works for the happiness of others” (Yasna 43.1 Song 8.1). These are the vital beliefs held by every Zoroastrian coming from the pedagogy of Ahura Mazda to Zarathustra. Believing in God does have a large presence in Zoroastrian belief though according to the Gathas, believing in God is not what defines you as a Zoroastrian, practicing Ahura Mazda’s guiding principles and morals are what makes someone a Zoroastrian.